CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

SUNDAY ▸ MARCH 22, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 246 ▸ PAGES 8 ▸ ₹2.00

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PM Modi speaks with Iran Prez, condemns attacks on critical infra **P6**

Tehran does not seek war with neighboring countries: Prez **P7**

P8 Sandalwood Stars Who Began Their Journey From Television Industry

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US LIFTS IRAN OIL SANCTIONS TO 'UNGRIP...'

US Treasury secretary Scott Bessent says move will bring 140m barrels to global market but insists Tehran will not benefit; The action shows mounting energy crisis pressures and limited options to contain surging global prices as West Asia war enters Day 23.

WASHINGTON

IRAN WAR DAY 23

As tensions in West Asia threaten global energy supplies, the Trump administration has issued a 30-day sanctions waiver for the purchase of Iranian oil stranded at sea to ease energy supply pressures, said US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent.

This was the third time the US has temporarily waived sanctions in about two weeks. "At present, sanctioned Iranian oil is being hoarded by China on the cheap. By temporarily unlocking this existing supply for the world, the United States will quickly bring approximately 140 million barrels of oil to global markets, expanding the amount of worldwide energy and helping to relieve the temporary pressures on supply caused by Iran," Bessent said in a statement on X.

He stated that this waiver is applied to oil that is already in transit, including sanctioned tankers, on or before March 20 and discharged by April 19, and does not allow new purchases or production.

Further, Iran will have difficulty accessing any revenue generated and the US will continue to maintain maximum pressure on Iran and its ability to access the international financial system, he added.

"So far, the Trump Administration has been working to bring around 440 million additional barrels of oil to the global market, undercutting Iran's ability to leverage its disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz," Bessent added.

The waiver applies to oil loaded on any vessel, including sanctioned tankers, on or before March 20 and discharged by April 19, according to the Office of Foreign Assets Control. It is the third time the US has temporarily waived sanctions on oil since the start of the war.e

As per Kpler's senior manager for crude oil market data, about 170 million barrels of Iranian crude are on ships scattered from the Middle East Gulf to the waters near China. Previously, on March 12, the Trump administration has temporarily eased restrictions on Russian oil transit and purchases.

WASHINGTON'S 'SANCTION' SHOCK

On the 22nd day of the West Asia conflict, the Trump administration issued a shock -- 30-day sanctions waiver for Iranian oil. The objective? To free up 140 million barrels of Iranian oil trapped at sea to crash global prices while ensuring the regime's bank accounts remain frozen. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent confirmed the move, stating the US will effectively "use Iranian barrels against Tehran" to drive down prices, tit for tat for Hormuz blocking. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent verified this decision, indicating that the US will strategically "utilize Iranian barrels against Tehran" to reduce prices.

HORMUZ STANDOFF: BREAKING GLOBAL ENERGY CHOKEHOLD

Since Feb 28, Iran has effectively throttled the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint which carries 20% of the world's oil. This blockade pushed Brent crude to a staggering $112.19, prompting Washington's latest manoeuvre. By unlocking oil currently with waiver on Iran oil, allegedly being "hoarded by China on the cheap", the US aims to provide a massive 440-mn-barrel cushion to the global market, undercutting Iran's leverage over the Hormuz while ensuring the "head of the snake" remains financially strangled, said Bessent.

ENDING 'CHINA MONOPOLY': MOVE TO STOP BEIJING'S CHEAP HOARDING

Treasury Secretary Bessent accused China of hoarding Iranian oil "on the cheap" during the war. The new waiver effectively floods the market with millions of barrels of oil, erasing Beijing's "discount" advantage. He noted that the waiver is strictly applicable "to oil that is already in transit and does not allow new purchases or production".

EMPTYING COFFERS: WHY THE ISLAMIC REGIME WON'T SEE A CENT OF OIL SURGE

Bessent said "head of the snake for global terrorism," and using this groundbreaking strategy, the US is effectively decapitating it. While the US is permitting the sale of oil, it will continue to block Iran's access to the revenue, which means Tehran loses its physical oil reserves without gaining the international currency needed to run its war machine.

US' OIL GAMBIT

HOW TRUMP IS USING TEHRAN'S OIL AGAINST TEHRAN AMID HORMUZ BLOCKADE

US temporarily lifts sanctions on Iranian oil to inject supply into strained markets.

Officials acknowledge limited options to control prices, with analysts warning the US is "running out of options."

Move highlights contradiction of enabling Iranian oil sales while continuing military operations against Tehran.

HOW US WILL BANKRUPT IRAN?

Bessent noted Iran will not be able to access any revenue generated from this oil, effectively emptying Tehran's oil coffers, while denying it any money in return. "The US will continue to maintain maximum pressure on Iran and its ability to access the international financial system," he added.

US-Israel strike Natanz nuclear site, yet again

JERUSALEM

The US and Israel carried out fresh strikes on Iran's Natanz uranium-enrichment facility on Saturday morning, the Islamic Republic's atomic energy organisation stated as the conflict in West Asia has entered its 22nd day.

Fortunately, there were no signs of radioactive fallout from the site in central Iran. This comes as the war in West Asia enters its fourth week.

"Following the criminal attacks by the US and the usurping Zionist regime against our country, the Natanz enrichment complex was targeted this morning," it stated. It added that there was "no leakage of radioactive materials reported" in the area in central Iran.

Natanz, Iran's main enrichment site, was hit in the first week of the war, and several buildings appeared damaged, according to satellite images.

The nuclear facility, located nearly 220 km (135 miles) southeast of Tehran, had been targeted by Israeli airstrikes in the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in June 2025, and by the US.

Iran strikes US-UK military base in Indian Ocean

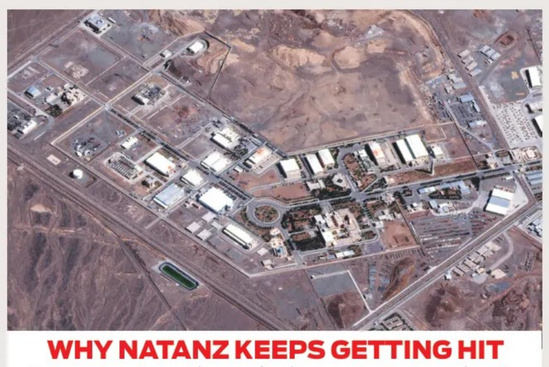
Tehran Iran on Saturday fired two ballistic missiles at Diego Garcia, a joint US-UK military base in the Indian Ocean, in its farthest missile launch on record.

The reported airstrike came a day after President Trump said the US is considering "winding down" its military operation in Iran, adding that other countries would need to police the Strait of Hormuz.

"Tehran is growing bolder in showing its ability to reach Europe," said an Israeli intelligence expert.Meanwhile, Iran said its Natanz nuclear facility was attacked for the second time in the current war.

UK hits back after missiles fired at Diego Garcia

The United Kingdom has strongly responded to what it described as Iran's reckless attacks after Tehran launched intermediate-range ballistic missiles at the UK-US military base on Diego Garcia. The Ministry of Defence said Iran was effectively holding the Strait of Hormuz "hostage," warning that its strikes in the Gulf pose a threat to British interests and its allies. This comes after Donald Trump criticised Keir Starmer for not moving quickly enough to permit the US to use British bases for strikes against Iranian missile activity in the region.



WHY NATANZ KEEPS GETTING HIT

Natanz is not simply one facility among many. The site is carved deep into Iran's mountainous interior and is protected beneath layers of rock. It was engineered to house thousands of uranium-enriching centrifuges while withstanding aerial assault. That hardened, underground design made it a notoriously difficult target; one requiring specialised munitions and meticulous military planning to penetrate effectively. Its significance extends beyond engineering. The enrichment process at Natanz serves dual purposes of generating fuel for civilian energy needs while simultaneously producing material that, if refined further, could yield weapons-grade uranium.

REGION ON THE EDGE

The conflict's scope has grown sharply since Israel struck Iran's South Pars gas field, triggering retaliatory actions that pulled Gulf states deeper into the crisis. Tehran on Saturday announced the launch of their 70th wave of attacks with missiles and drones directed at Israel and US bases in the Gulf. Since the war began on February 28, more than 1,400 people are reported to have been killed in Iran. The casualty figures include at least 204 children.

Indian refiners look to buy Iranian oil as US waives sanctions: Report

MUMBAI

Indian refiners plan to resume buying Iranian oil while refiners elsewhere in Asia are examining such a move after Washington temporarily removed sanctions to alleviate an energy crunch caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran, traders said on Saturday.

Three Indian refining sources said they will buy Iranian oil and are awaiting government directions and clarity from Washington on details such as payment terms.

Refiners in India, which has much smaller crude stockpiles than other big Asian oil importers, rushed to book Russian oil after the US recently lifted sanctions temporarily. The Indian government could not be immediately reached for comment outside office hours.

Other Asian refiners are making checks to see if they can purchase the oil, several people with knowledge of the matter said.

SHORTS FROM WAR FRONT

KHARG ISLAND WARNING

The US could "take out" Iran's Kharg island whenever it wanted, the White House said after a report that President Donald Trump's administration was considering plans to occupy or blockade the oil hub.

UK CLEARS US TO USE ITS BASES

British ministers have agreed to allow the US military to use the UK's military bases in operations to prevent Iran attacking ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

MORE US TROOPS IN WEST ASIA

The US is deploying additional 2,500 Marines to West Asia, US media reported, possibly signalling a coming ground operation three weeks into the US-Israeli campaign against Iran.

22 COUNTRIES URGE IRAN TO REOPEN STRAIT OF HORMUZ

At least 22 countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, UK, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea and Australia, on Saturday urged Iran to cease attacks and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. In a joint statement, they condemned Iran's attacks on commercial vessels as well as oil and gas facilities in the region.

'SHIPPING LANES MUST REMAIN OPEN, SECURE': MODI

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday spoke to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and condemned the attacks on critical infrastructure across Iran, which he described as a threat to regional stability.

In a post on 'X', PM Modi wrote, "Spoke with President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian and conveyed Eid and Nowruz greetings. We expressed hope that this festive season brings peace, stability, and prosperity to West Asia."

> Appreciated Iran's continued support for the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iran.
> —Narendra Modi, PM

The PM reiterated the significance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and called for ensuring the security of shipping lanes amid the blockade of Strait of Hormuz — a vital maritime chokepoint which accounts for one-fifth of the world's oil and gas trade — which impacted energy supplies globally.

"Condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains. Reiterated the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure. Appreciated Iran's continued support for the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iran", Modi added.

This was PM Modi's second call with the Iranian President since the conflict in West Asia began with the February 28 US-Israel coordinated strikes on Iran.

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CM joins Eid prayers in Bengaluru

BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday joined people at Masjid-e-Khadria in Bengaluru to offer namaz on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, as large crowds gathered to mark the end of the holy month of Ramzan with prayers and celebrations.

Addressing the gathering after the prayers, Siddaramaiah emphasised the importance of unity, love, and communal harmony in a diverse country like India. "Today is the festival of Eid. We all prayed together. We pray for humanity. Everyone should make their life worthwhile; we should all live with love and faith. India is a country of many cultures; despite many religions, there should be unity. No religion teaches hatred; it teaches love. Eid Mubarak to all. Happy Eid to all the Muslim brothers," he said.

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah joins Eid-ul-Fitr prayers at Masjid-e-Khadria in Bengaluru on Saturday ▸ CH PHOTO

Heavy rush: Vaishno Devi yatra suspended

JAMMU

The pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi was suspended on Saturday due to heavy rush at the Bhawan, as 39,000 devotees offered prayers till late afternoon, officials said.

The rush has increased due to the ongoing Chaitra Navratri, which began on March 19 and will end on March 27.

The shrine board is expecting a heavy rush of devotees from across the country during this period.

"The yatra has been suspended temporarily due to heavy rush at Bhawan," a shrine board official said.

FLAGS RUPEE SLIDE

Inflation coming': Rahul slams Centre over weak rupee

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused the Modi government of lacking both direction and strategy necessary to manage the current economic situation facing the nation.

Gandhi also expressed concern that the government will raise the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG following the elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and the UT of Puducherry scheduled next month.

The leader of opposition in Lok Sabha said the weakening value of rupee against the US dollar and a sharp rise in industrial fuel prices will inevitably lead to price hikes affecting every Indian.

He also claimed that while the government offers "empty rhetoric" and maintains that everything is "normal", the reality is that the rising costs of daily items will impact every household.

"The rupee weakening against the dollar and heading towards 100, along with a sharp rise in industrial fuel prices – these are not just numbers; they are clear signals of the inflation to come.

The Congress has criticised the government's handling of the economic situation arising from geopolitical tensions in West Asia, which have affected global energy markets and, in turn, India's import bill.

QUICK READ

Don't step on wires during rain, BESCOM

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
With pre-monsoon showers lashing parts of the city over the past two days, Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) issued an advisory urging citizens to follow electrical safety measures. The power utility cautioned people against going near damaged poles, snapped wires or tree branches that have fallen on electric lines due to strong winds and rain. It also warned against standing under trees carrying power lines or moving close to transformers during rain. BESCOM asked citizens to report such incidents to its helpline 1912 or WhatsApp numbers: South Circle: 8277884011; West Circle: 8277884012; East Circle: 8277884013; North Circle: 8277884014.

2 cylinders stolen on Ugadi festival day

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
Amidst the cylinder shortage, a miscreant stole 2 domestic cylinders and escaped on the day of Ugadi Festival in Begur.
People in the state are struggling for cylinders. In such a situation, two unknown youths broke into an apartment in Begur, on the day of Ugadi festival, stole two household cylinders and escaped. The incident took place in Vishwapriya Apartment in RC Layout near Begur.
On Thursday afternoon, two youths wearing helmets came on a bike. One of them, who was standing outside, went inside with the other bike and stole two cylinders and escaped without raising any suspicion in broad daylight. The scene of the cylinder theft was captured on the CCTV. The owner of the house has filed a complaint with the Begur police station regarding the incident.

Challaghatta railway underbridge ready, road nears completion

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The long-awaited connectivity boost for west Bengaluru is finally nearing reality. Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has completed the railway underbridge (RUB) at Challaghatta, a crucial component of infrastructure under the Major Arterial Road (MAR) project. Once fully operational, the corridor will create a seamless link between Magadi Road and the Bengaluru–Mysuru access-controlled highway through Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout (NPKL). Officials say the long-delayed project has now entered its final stretch, with full completion expected by April. According to BDA officials, construction of the RUB involved several technical challenges as the work had to be carried.

Use of AI plays an important role in the justice process, CJI Surya Kant

Surya Kant said artificial intelligence will enhance justice delivery, guiding parties through every stage from filing to final order issuance

CH NEWSBENGALURU

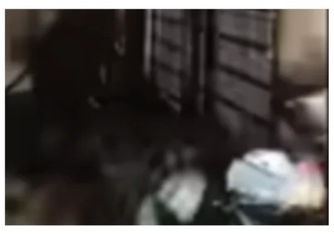
Artificial intelligence will play a key role in the administration of justice and will provide explanations to the parties about all stages of the process from the day the application is filed until the final order is issued, said Supreme Court Chief Justice Surya Kant.He was speaking while inaugurating a symposium on Dispute Prevention and Resolution through Artificial Intelligence (AI) organized in the city by the Karnataka Judicial Academy.Laws, regulations, and legal practices may change over time. However, the concept of justice remains constant and serves as the foundation of the legal system. Artificial intelligence can support the justice system, he said, but the responsibility to interpret the law and ensure justice always lies with human judges.Technology has made court proceedings faster and more efficient, not only for judges, magistrates, and lawyers, but also for ordinary citizens seeking justice.

Despite these advantages, there cannot be an overreliance on artificial intelligence in the judicial decision-making process. AI can be very useful for tasks such as legal research, analyzing large amounts of data, and supporting administrative work in courts.Electronic filing systems, digital case management and public access to court data have improved transparency and efficiency in the administration of justice. Courts do not just apply rules. They interpret laws in the context of real-life situations and human experiences. Therefore, no matter how effectively artificial intelligence is used again, the need for human judges to make final decisions will continue to grow, he said.

> The legal system is constantly evolving in response to social changes, technological advancements, and people's needs. In modern times, the legal system has undergone another major transformation as courts increasingly move from traditional paper-based processes to digital platforms and technology-driven systems, Supreme Court Chief Justice Surya Kant said.

Fire destroys over 1k patient files at NIMHANS

CH NEWSBENGALURU



More than 1,000 patient files and registers were destroyed in a fire at the medical records department (MRD) within the OPD building of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS). The fire was contained, but the matter has not been reported to police yet.The incident occurred around 6.30pm after the department had closed. We got a call from Nimhans at 6.59pm, seeking help, said G Ravikumar, a firefighter who works with the state fire and emergency services department. Our personnel reached the hospital, extinguished the fire, and got back, he told. Dr HN Shashidhara, resident medical officer at NIMHANS, said that soon after smoke was noticed emanating from the MRD windows, action was taken and sprinklers activated, which helped contain the fire.

The fire did not spread as a major blaze; instead, it caused superficial damage to a few hundred patient record files and some registers, with no complete destruction or casualties reported, he said, adding the hospital has a digital hospital information system in place, introduced in July 2025, and hence most records are backed up. Though the authorities claim that the fire will not impact patient care, sources say otherwise.

The damage is not just limited to the loss of handwritten prescriptions by senior doctors, as claimed by the authorities. Seven racks were burnt to ashes, each of which had at least 60 files. The destroyed or damaged records may include medico-legal/court case files and records related to prison inmates referred for mental health evaluation, raising potential legal implications, said a source, on the condition of anonymity. Meanwhile, Dr Shashidhara said an inspection, including an external biosafety/fire safety person identified two likely sources, overheating from an old tubelight choke or an exhaust fan. We haven't filed an FIR yet, as there is no loss of life, injury, major property loss, or suspicion of foul play. Future precautions will include replacing old tubelights with LED lighting, supported by a government action plan/grant and reorganising MRD storage/furniture to reduce dense packing so any future fire would be less likely to spread, he added.

Dr HR Arvinda, Medical Superintendent at NIMHANS, said the suspected cause is an electrical short circuit, but this is only a preliminary assessment.

Tragedy strikes family, 4-year-old crushed by lorry on way to temple

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A heartbreaking road accident has claimed the life of a four-year-old girl in Nelamangala. The tragic incident occurred in Hanumanthagowdanapalya under the jurisdiction of Madanayakanahalli Police Station, leaving a family shattered.

The victim, identified as Nishika, was the first daughter of Rajendra (35) and Lavanya (30). The family had stepped out after celebrating the Ugadi festival and was on their way to a temple for darshan when the accident took place.

According to reports, Lavanya was carrying her second child in her arms while holding Nishika's hand as they walked along the road.

Challaghatta railway underbridge ready, major arterial road nears April completion

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The long-awaited connectivity boost for west Bengaluru is finally nearing reality. Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has completed the railway underbridge (RUB) at Challaghatta, a crucial component of infrastructure under the Major Arterial Road (MAR) project. Once fully operational, the corridor will create a seamless link between Magadi Road and the Bengaluru–Mysuru access-controlled highway through Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout (NPKL). Officials say the long-delayed project has now entered its final stretch, with full completion expected by April. According to BDA officials, construction of the RUB involved several technical challenges as the work had to be carried out beneath a live railway track connecting Bengaluru and Mysuru.

The work was executed in phases over the last three months in coordination with South Western Railway. The 40-metre box-pushing operation was particularly complex, with each of the eight concrete boxes weighing about 1,200 metric tonnes. Works beneath an active railway line usually take around six months. However, with close coordination with the railways, deployment of additional manpower and round-the-clock work, the project was completed in three months, a BDA official said.

BDA is also constructing a vehicular overpass near RUB. The proposed overpass, located about 10 metres from the underpass, will provide connectivity between Blocks 5 and 6 of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout. Officials said the overpass work is progressing well and is expected to be completed in a month. The MAR is being developed as part of the proposed Peripheral Ring Road Phase-2 project that will link Hosur Road with Bengaluru–Mysuru highway. Officials said the state government has approved acquisition of four acres of land along the MAR alignment for the project. There are 17 points where service roads currently have missing links. Process is on to complete the works that include with ducts and provisions for utilities, the official said.

Motorists and allottees of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout have demanded that the Challaghatta junction, where the MAR meets the Bengaluru–Mysuru highway, be designed in a futuristic manner to avoid traffic congestion. BDA currently plans to install traffic signals at the junction and take up integration works as part of the PRR-2 project. Officials said traffic police have been consulted to ensure smooth movement at the junction.

Considering public demand, BDA will also construct a cycle track along the corridor and undertake beautification with flower- and fruit-bearing trees. The 11-km road is planned as a 100-metre wide,

10-lane corridor with six main carriageway lanes and four service lanes to manage local traffic.

Govt shelves free CET crash course for govt college students

Online CET coaching programmes, supposed to prepare students for CET 2026 are yet to restart.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

With just a month left for Karnataka Common Entrance Test (KCET), the government has shelved its plan of holding free CET crash course for students from government PU colleges. The department of PU education had planned a 30 day residential course for Science students to prepare them for entrance exams like CET. The plan was to identify interested students and conduct classes in a select school in each district. A three-day teacher training programme planned in the second week of March did not take place. The students now have to shell out a minimum of Rs 18,000 for 30-day coaching from private institutes.

The department cited technical issues for postponing CET coaching. We encountered some problems in getting critical approvals for the programme since it spans two financial years, said S Bharat, Director, department of PU education.

Instead, we are coming up with a new model of CET coaching from 2026-27 in PU colleges with our faculty, he said. The proposal is to build fresh content and deliver it in a year-long format.

We are trying to build content with the help of DSERT, which will be delivered along with PU curriculum. This will be a year-long project, and not a crash course, he said, adding teachers will be trained to deliver CET training.

Since exams were going on for PU-2, the classes were not happening. Now we are planning to restart in two phases. Till evaluation of papers is over, we do not have lecturers in colleges. We plan to conduct YouTube sessions starting next week. By March-end, we'll direct the principal to be available for facilitating sessions, the Director explained. The government decision is a big blow for students from low-income households. Without any alternative, students are approaching private tutorials for entrance coaching. It is common knowledge that entrance coaching is a must to attain a good rank. Poor students are being left out in this race, said a PU college lecturer. Some principals from districts like Vijayanagar and Ballari use various funds like district mining funds to organise some classes in college. A few Bengaluru colleges have tied up with NGOs to get CET classes going. Largely, students are left without any handholding, said AH Ningegowda, Karnataka State PU College Lecturers' Association.

Ramadan is a symbol of peace, brotherhood and humanity, MLA ST Somashekar

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

MLA ST Somashekhar said that by praying collectively after completing the month of fasting. Speaking after participating in the mass prayer of Muslim brothers and sisters held on the occasion of the holy festival of Ramadan at the Eidgah Maidan on Doddabele Road in Yeshwantpur assembly constituency, he extended his greetings to the Muslim brothers and sisters.

After observing the fast for a month and announcing the sighting of the moon by the Qazis, everyone came together on Saturday morning to offer devotional prayers and send a good message to the society about the importance of celebrating the festival of Ramadan. After the mass prayer, they went to the graveyard near the mosque and paid homage to the departed elders. Chief religious leader Imam Saab Mas, who led the prayer, delivered a message on the importance of the day. Former Zilla Panchayat member Shivamadaiah, Chetan Gowda, T Prabhakar, Amanullah, Sajjad Babu, Farshid, Mukhtiar, and others were present.

AGENCY FINED FOR CUTTING CARE FOR 70-YEAR-OLD'S DISABLED SON

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A 70-year-old widow, HS Vinoda, has got relief after a consumer disputes redressal commission pulled up a city-based caregiver agency for abruptly stopping services for her bedridden son despite receiving the monthly fee in advance. The Bengaluru Urban II additional district consumer disputes redressal commission ordered Sagar Health Seva Foundation (SHSF) to refund the monthly fee paid in advance and pay compensation as well as litigation costs to the complainant, who lives in BSK III Stage. The complainant's only son, Vikram, is bedridden due to secondary progressive multiple sclerosis, with spastic quadriparesis. He requires round-the-clock support for even basic day-to-day activities such as eating, bathing, and personal care. According to her complaint, SHSF assured her that it would provide trained caregivers who would stay at her residence and, to ensure uninterrupted service, substitutes would be arranged immediately in case anyone was absent. Based on these assurances, Vinoda signed a service agreement with the agency on April 18, 2024, and paid Rs 23,000 a month in advance through UPI transactions from April 2024 until Jan 2025.The agency initially provided the services, but the situation changed after she made the payment for January. The agency abruptly stopped sending the caregiver within two days of her January 11, 2025, payment, leaving her son without the required assistance. Despite repeated attempts to contact the agency for a replacement or refund, she allegedly received no response.

MEAT EATERS DISAPPOINTED

LPG crunch takes country chicken out of plate!

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The shortage of commercial LPG, triggered by the ongoing crisis in West Asia, has begun to take a deeper toll on Bengaluru's food ecosystem, with chicken shops reporting sharp losses and limited offerings. While the supply crunch has affected eateries for nearly two weeks, its impact was felt more acutely Friday, a traditionally high-demand day for non-vegetarian food during Ugadi (Hosatodaku), leaving many customers disappointed.

Chicken vendors across the city said short supply of LPG has forced them not to prepare certain varieties, particularly 'naati koli' (country chicken) and skin-on chicken, both of which require sustained flame for proper cleaning and roasting.

In the absence of adequate LPG supply, many shops have temporarily stopped selling these items, restricting their menus to skinless chicken. For the past 15 days, we have stopped selling country chicken, and even skin chicken is unavailable, said Prathap, a chicken shop owner in Chandapura. We are struggling to get LPG cylinders at any cost. On Friday, which should have been a big business day, turned out to be very bad for us.Vendors explained that country chicken requires intense flame to singe off feathers and clean the meat, while skin-on chicken must be thoroughly roasted to remove impurities and ensure hygiene, making LPG essential for daily operations. Attaulla Sharaff, who runs a shop near Lalbagh Main Gate, said the situation has worsened as existing gas stocks have run out. We have not received commercial LPG for almost 15 days. People mostly prefer skin chicken and when we don't have it, they simply walk away. We have lost nearly 40 percent of our customers, he said.

QUICK READ

Water Board gears up to address summer water shortage, 65 critical points identified

Supplying and maintaining water during summer is a major headache for the city dwellers who depend on Cauvery water.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

With the heat of summer in Silicon City, people's thirst for water is also increasing day by day. The Water Board is preparing to meet the increasing water demand in the summer. Areas where water demand is highest during summer have been identified and 65 wards have been identified as critical points.

The Water Board has formulated an action plan for adequate supply and management of Cauvery water. Through this, it is taking strict precautions to ensure that the

city residents do not face water shortage. About 35 percent of the people in Bengaluru depend on groundwater. However, about 20 percent of the groundwater has depleted. Thus, the Water Board is carrying out various exercises to overcome the water shortage.

Bangalore is supplied with 1,450 MLD of Cauvery water daily. Bangalore requires about 1,600 MLD of water. Due to this, there is a shortage of about 150 MLD of water. In the backdrop of summer, the demand will increase further and the water shortage will also increase, the water board fears. The interim reports of the Indian Institute of Science have shown that the yield of tube wells in the city and the groundwater level will decrease during the summer season. Therefore, the water board has formulated an action plan to supply water according to the demand.

65 wards are critical points: The Water Board has already identified 65 wards in the city where water demand is high as critical points. Among these, Chamarajpet, Siddapur, Jakkur, Doddabommasandra, T. Dasarahalli, Jalahalli, Sanjay Nagar, Hebbal, Nagawara, Horamavu, Ramamurthy Nagar, Doddabidarakallu, Peenya, Nandini Layout, J.C. Nagar, K.R. Pura, Mahalaxmipur, Shivajinagar, Gandhinagar, Basaveshwaranagar, Binnipet, Vijayanagar, Nagarbhavi, Nayandanahalli, Koramangala, Srinagar, Gali Anjaneya Temple, Kengeri, Girinagar, Deepanjali Nagar, Katriguppe, Kumaraswamy Layout, BTM Layout, Bomanahalli, Kengeri and Konanakunte have the highest water demand and have been identified as critical points.

1 tanker allocated to each service station: Currently, there are 111 water tankers of various capacities in the custody of the Bangalore Water Board. Additionally, there are 51 private water tankers. There are 143 service stations in the Bangalore Water Board. 1 tanker has been allocated to each service station.

BMTC to roll out 11,000 smart ticket machines

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The digital upgrade aims to improve ticketing efficiency, ensure transparency, and offer a seamless travel experience for passengers. In a major step towards digital transformation, Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) is set to modernise its ticketing system by introducing advanced Electronic Ticketing Machines (ETMs) across its buses. As part of this initiative, BMTC has floated a tender worth Rs 40 crore to procure 11,000 new smart ETM machines in the first phase. These machines will replace the existing systems and are expected to significantly improve the efficiency of ticketing operations.

GLOBAL COLD CHAIN SOLUTIONS

Officer appointed for acquisition of cold chain unit

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Agriculture Department has appointed an acquisition officer to aquire the Poojenahalli Integrated Cold Chain unit from KPEC. Officials of the Agriculture Department said that Karnataka State Agricultural Produce Processing and Export Corporation Limited (KSEPC), Bangalore has been appointed as the clearance officer. KPEC had built an integrated cold chain unit at Poojenahalli Horticultural Estate near Devanahalli under the Horticulture Department's National Agricultural Development Scheme using its internal resources. In 2024, it was awarded to Fiza Global Agroventures through a contract. This company had not paid the rent on time. The unit was being used for purposes other than the contract. A notice was issued in this regard. The Managing Director of KPEC had asked to return the unit to KPEC.

Work information board mandatory, DS Ramesh

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Eastern Municipal Corporation Commissioner DS Ramesh has suggested that a signboard with complete information about any development work being carried out in the area should be installed. DS Ramesh conducted a site inspection on Friday regarding road and infrastructure development, railway underpass work, lake development, garbage disposal and footpath encroachment in the areas surrounding Horamavu Agara, Banjara Layout, Kalkere Layout, Babusapalya and Challakere. The Commissioner, who held discussions with representatives of the Local Residents' Welfare Development Association and residents, directed the concerned authorities to take appropriate action for the speedy resolution of the problems. The Babusapalya railway underpass work has been delayed due to a land dispute between a private party and the railway department. The work should be started immediately after ensuring that there is no stay order.

800 kg bronze Appu statue unveiled

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

MLA Ashwath Narayan and Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar inaugurated the 800 kg bronze statue of late Puneeth Rajkumar at Triangle Park in front of Sankey Lake here. Speaking after the unveiling of the statue, MLA Ashwath Narayan said that Puneeth Rajkumar was born and brought up in Sadashivanagar and demanded that his statue be made. Therefore, the statue has been unveiled as per the wish of Puneeth's fans. The statue was unveiled with the cooperation of GBA West Zone officials and the government for unveiling the statue. He said that he would like to thank the government and the GBA West Zone officials. Actor Puneeth's wife Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar spoke and said, thanks to Ashwath Narayan, the statue is beautiful.

Only half of Bengaluru voters mapped, officials blame urban apathy

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Even after more than two months of sustained efforts, just over half of Bengaluru's voters have been mapped by authorities ahead of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls in Karnataka. Authorities have attributed the slow progress to several factors, including urban apathy, the unavailability of residents during weekdays, and significant changes in the city's residential landscape over the past 24 years. The mapping exercise is being conducted by Booth-Level Officers (BLOs), who visit households to verify the voter list from 2002 against the updated list for 2025.

The SIR was last conducted in Karnataka in 2002. As part of the process, voters listed in 2002 are being verified, and their next generation is being recorded as progeny. The city has grown leaps and bounds since 2002. Many residents have moved in from other states and become voters here. However, we require information on where they voted in 2002, and we also map their parents as ancestors in the respective constituencies in those states, H Amaresh, Additional Commissioner (Revenue), Bengaluru North City Corporation, said.

According to officials, only 54.3 percent of voters were covered during the pre-SIR exercise carried out by city corporations on behalf of the Election Commission.

BNCC has been leading in the pre-SIR mapping efforts, with Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar as the Assistant District Electoral Officer (ADEO), Bengaluru North. A total of seven assembly constituencies are covered by ADEO (North), with a total voter count of over 23 lakh. A Greater Bengaluru Authority official said the mapping in Bengaluru is being supervised by four additional district electoral officers for Bengaluru Urban, Central, North, and South. The exercise is not related to the upcoming city corporation elections. Corrections related to ward-wise distribution of voters will be taken up by the state election commission. Close to 9,000 personnel are working on the exercise in the city. Most of the BLOs are schoolteachers. Other staff from departments like KGID, Treasury and BESCOM have also been deputed for the exercise, the official added. Amaresh said the main challenge has been people's lack of willingness to provide information to the BLOs. Though they are educated, many urban residents do not understand the importance of such exercises. We have had meetings with Residents' Associations to raise awareness, he added. Many BLOs were asked to conduct special drives on weekends to cover voters who were unavailable during weekdays. As most BLOs are schoolteachers, they are required to conduct the mapping before or after school hours.

Mapping of voters will continue till the commencement of SIR, which is scheduled for April. Voters who have missed the mapping exercise can alert their BLO using the 'Book a call with BLO' facility on the voter services portal of the EC's website, voters.eci.gov.in, where they must enter their EPIC number.

Exploring Women-Led Operations at Banaswadi Railway Station

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Students and faculty from the Christ (Deemed to be University) Bannerghatta Road Campus visited Banaswadi Railway Station as part of an engagement linked to International Women's Day. The visit provided an opportunity to observe the functioning of Karnataka's only railway station operated entirely by women and to understand how operational responsibilities are organised within a women-led team.

The concept of all-women railway stations was introduced by Indian Railways in 2018 to increase women's participation in operational roles within the public transport sector. At Banaswadi, women staff members manage responsibilities across the station's operational system, including station supervision, signalling coordination, passenger assistance, security, and technical maintenance.

During the visit, participants interacted with station staff to learn about the routines that support the functioning of a busy transport hub. Discussions focused on scheduling practices, platform management, and safety procedures that regulate the movement of passengers and trains throughout the day. These conversations offered insight into the practical demands involved in maintaining railway operations.

Faculty members observed that the functioning of the station raises broader questions about gender representation in technical public-sector roles. Observing women carry out operational responsibilities across the system illustrates how institutional arrangements can expand participation in sectors historically associated with male employment.

The engagement also acknowledged the role of the station staff in sustaining routine railway operations within demanding logistical conditions. The interaction highlights how everyday workplaces can serve as sites for examining participation and representation in public infrastructure systems.

Water Board waives interest on arrears for Ugadi

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The water board has made a great offer to the people of the city who have outstanding drinking water bills. The water board has announced that if the outstanding water bill is paid in full within three months from April to June, the interest on it will be waived. This offer is a Ugadi gift from the water board to the citizens, Deputy Chief Minister (DCM) DK Shivakumar, who is also the Minister in-charge of Bengaluru, said in a media release. The DCM informed that the One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme will be implemented from April to benefit consumers who have been arrears with water bills for a long time.

Out of the nearly 11 lakh water connections under the jurisdiction of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), 5.11 lakh consumers have outstanding drinking water bills. As per the information till the end of February 2026, the total outstanding amount is Rs 851.33 crore. This includes principal amount of Rs. 539.43 crore and interest of Rs 311.90 crore. To facilitate the people who have outstanding water bills, the interest will be waived under the 'OTS' scheme if the bill principal is paid. Under the OTS scheme to be implemented by BWSSB from April, 100% interest on water bills will be waived. If customers pay their principal amount in full within the 3-month scheme period, the entire interest accrued till April 2026 will be waived in the form of rebate.

Minister Priyank Kharge instructs CEOs to hold meetings with PDOs to address water shortage in summer

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge has instructed the Chief Executive Officers of Zilla Panchayats to hold a meeting with the Panchayat Development Officers (PDOs) on the material status of the drinking water problem on every 2nd and 4th Monday for the next three months to make appropriate arrangements for the people of rural areas in case of shortage of drinking water.

In addition, a press conference should be called on every 2nd and 4th Tuesday to inform the public about the steps taken to resolve the drinking water problem in the districts.

The minister said that in order to adequately manage the drinking water shortage situation, 24/7 control rooms

should be opened in all Zilla Panchayats, staff should be deployed and a rapid taskforce should be formed through executive officers at the taluk level to adequately manage the situation.

A 100 percent physical inspection of water sources in rural settlements should be conducted and proper drainage system should be implemented around borewells to ensure that no polluted water or sewage water stagnates and that the polluted water flows smoothly.

Priyank Kharge explained that the officials have been given a strict warning to take precautions by building a concrete embankment around the borewell and preventing polluted water from entering the borewell.

Instructions have also been given to create awareness among the villagers to effectively manage the safety of water sources and adequately manage the drinking water shortage situation. Due to the drying up of existing water sources in rural areas during summer and the decreasing yield of tube wells, there is a problem of drinking water for the public in rural populated areas of some districts of the state. He said that the officials have already been informed about the steps to be taken to make appropriate arrangements for the people of rural areas if they face drinking water shortage.

EID MUBARAK...

Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan and Actor Zaid Khan participated in the Ramzan prayers held at Eidgah grounds in Chamarajpet on Saturday. ▸ CH PHOTO

RESTORING ECOLOGICAL BALANCE

COMMUNITY REVIVES CRPF CAMPUS LAKE

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A once-neglected pond inside the CRPF campus in Yelahanka, North Bengaluru, has been transformed into a thriving three-acre lake through a community-driven sustainability effort, highlighting how collective action can revive degraded urban ecosystems.The three-month effort, led by the BlueDot Foundation in collaboration with Tekion and other partners, focused on restoring ecological balance rather than merely beautifying the waterbody

and its adjoining landscape. What was previously choked with sludge, silt, and invasive algae has now been revived into a living water body designed to support biodiversity and long-term environmental health. Centred on scientific and sustainable practices, the revival aimed to restore the lake to its original condition.

Extensive desilting helped recover the lake's natural depth and water-holding capacity, while improvements to the catchment area ensured better rainwater harvesting. Native plant species were carefully selected and introduced to rebuild habitats for birds, insects, and other fauna, creating a self-sustaining ecosystem.

This effort shows how degraded water bodies can be brought back to life with the right ecological approach and community participation, said Harsha Tej, founder and Director of BlueDot, emphasising the importance of using native flora to maintain ecological balance.

The initiative also brought together volunteers and stakeholders through a plantation drive, reinforcing the role of community engagement in environmental stewardship.

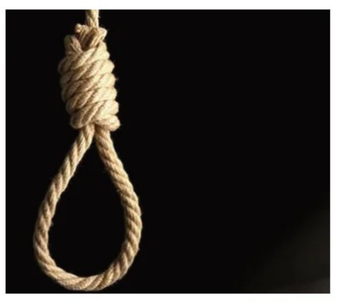
Tekion, which supported the project as part of its CSR efforts, reiterated its commitment to restoring one lake every year, contributing to a growing network of revived water bodies across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Social Welfare Officer Found Dead; Harassment Allegations Trigger Probe

A 59-year-old senior official of the Social Welfare Department was found dead inside his office in Pavagada town of Karnataka's Tumakuru district, triggering outrage and raising serious questions about workplace harassment

TUMAKURU

The deceased, identified as Mallikarjuna, was serving as an Assistant Director in the Social Welfare Department. His body was discovered inside the office premises after working hours under circumstances that have shocked colleagues and local residents alike. The incident has created tension in Pavagada and surrounding areas, with growing public demand for a transparent and thorough inquiry.



Soon after the news broke, a video allegedly recorded by Mallikarjuna began circulating widely on social media platforms. In the video, he is believed to have accused his superior officer, Krishnappa, of subjecting him to continuous mental harassment. Sources indicate that Mallikarjuna appeared visibly distressed in the recording, speaking about intense workplace pressure and emotional strain.

The note recovered from the scene is also said to contain similar allegations, further strengthening suspicions of harassment being a possible factor behind the incident. While the authenticity of both the video and the note is yet to be officially confirmed, they have become central to the ongoing investigation.

Authorities have registered a case and initiated a detailed probe into the matter. Senior officials from the department, along with police personnel, have begun examining evidence, including digital records and statements from staff members. The role of the accused superior officer is expected to come under close scrutiny in the coming days.

The incident has also sparked discussions on employee welfare and mental health in government offices, with many calling for stricter mechanisms to address workplace grievances. As the investigation progresses, officials have assured that appropriate action will be taken based on the findings.

KKRTC Bus Overturns, Eight Injured in Road Accident

CHIKKAMAGALURU

At least eight passengers were injured after a Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) bus overturned in Chikkamagaluru district of Karnataka. The accident, which occurred near Kodal village under Aldur police limits, has raised concerns over road safety and driver control on hilly routes

According to initial reports, the bus was travelling from Kukunoor to Dharmasthala with more than 40 passengers onboard when the mishap took place. The driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a turn near Kodal village. In a matter of moments, the bus rammed into a roadside electric pole with considerable force before overturning completely, leading to panic among passengers.

Eyewitnesses and local residents rushed to the spot immediately after hearing a loud crash. The scene was described as chaotic, with passengers trapped inside the overturned vehicle and others attempting to escape through broken windows. Rescue efforts were carried out swiftly with the help of locals and authorities.

Eight passengers sustained injuries in the accident, some of them suffering head injuries and severe fractures to their hands and legs. Emergency services responded promptly, and the injured were shifted to the district hospital in Chikkamagaluru for treatment. Hospital sources indicated that while a few passengers sustained serious injuries, most are currently out of danger.

Several other passengers, though not physically injured, were left in shock following the incident. Many of those travelling on the bus were local residents, while others were pilgrims heading towards Dharmasthala.

Police officials from Aldur station have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident. Preliminary findings point towards loss of control by the driver as the primary cause, though mechanical failure or road conditions are also being examined. Authorities have assured that necessary action will be taken after a detailed inquiry.

QUICK READ

Ramzan is a Sacred Festival Celebrated with Devotion: MLA S.N. Subbareddy

Bagepalli

MLA S.N. Subbareddy stated that Ramzan is a sacred festival celebrated with deep devotion and faith, while addressing members of the Muslim community during Ramzan observances in Bagepalli. The holy festival of Ramzan was celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm in Bagepalli, where members of the Muslim community gathered in large numbers to offer special prayers. The occasion was marked by spiritual fervour, unity, and a sense of togetherness as devotees participated in religious rituals and prayers. MLA S.N. Subbareddy attended the celebrations and extended his heartfelt greetings to the Muslim community. Speaking on the occasion, he said that Ramzan is a sacred and meaningful festival that is observed with devotion, discipline, and strong faith. He noted that the festival teaches values such as compassion, patience, charity, and self-control, which are essential for building a harmonious society.

Comprehensive Review Conducted on Gram Panchayat Functioning

Devanhalli

The review covered a wide range of issues related to grassroots administration, including the performance of Gram Panchayats, progress in ongoing development works, and the availability of basic infrastructure in rural areas. Key areas such as drinking water supply, sanitation, road connectivity, housing, and social security schemes were discussed in detail. Officials highlighted the need to ensure that the original objectives of the Constitution are effectively realized through local governance systems. Particular emphasis was placed on improving the quality of services provided to the public, encouraging greater participation of citizens in decision-making processes, and strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms within Panchayat institutions.

A large number of Muslim devotees gathered at the Eidgah Maidan in Chitradurga city to offer special prayers on the occasion of Ramzan, marking the festival with devotion, unity, and spiritual fervour

Special Ramzan Prayers Held at Eidgah Maidan

CHITRADURGA

The Eidgah Maidan in Chitradurga witnessed a significant congregation of Muslim devotees who assembled early in the morning to participate in special prayers as part of Ramzan observances. The atmosphere at the venue was filled with devotion and discipline, as worshippers dressed in traditional attire came together to offer prayers and seek blessings.

Religious leaders led the prayers, delivering messages that emphasized the core values of Ramzan, including compassion, charity, patience, and self-discipline. Devotees prayed for peace, harmony, and prosperity, not only for their families but also for society as a whole.

Authorities had made necessary arrangements at the Eidgah Maidan to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. Adequate security measures were put in place, and volunteers assisted in managing the large crowd, ensuring that the gathering remained peaceful and well-organized.

The occasion also saw participation from local leaders and officials, who extended their greetings to the Muslim community and acknowledged the importance of such festivals in promoting communal harmony. Many noted that Ramzan serves as a reminder of unity and coexistence among people of different faiths.

Following the prayers, devotees exchanged greetings and embraced one another, celebrating the spirit of togetherness that defines the festival. Acts of charity and distribution of food were also observed, reflecting the essence of giving that is central to Ramzan.

The event concluded peacefully, leaving behind a message of unity, faith, and goodwill, as the community came together to celebrate one of the most significant occasions in the Islamic calendar.

Power Outage Scheduled in Karwar on March 23 for Maintenance Work

KARWAR

A scheduled power outage will take place in several areas under the Sunkeri feeder in Karwar subdivision on Monday, March 23, 2026, due to ongoing electrical maintenance work.

According to an official statement issued by the Assistant Executive Engineer (Electrical), Operations and Maintenance Subdivision, HESCOM, Karwar, the interruption in power supply is necessary to carry out High Tension (HT) line replacement work. The maintenance activity aims to improve the reliability and efficiency of the power distribution network in the region.

The power outage will be in effect from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, during which electricity supply will remain suspended in multiple areas covered under the Sunkeri feeder. Residents and commercial establishments in the affected قطانملا are advised to make necessary arrangements in advance to avoid inconvenience.

Officials have urged consumers to cooperate during the maintenance period, emphasizing that such upgrades are essential for ensuring better service and preventing unexpected disruptions in the future. The HESCOM authorities also assured that efforts will be made to complete the work within the stipulated time and restore power supply promptly. Consumers have been requested to stay informed through official updates and plan their activities accordingly.

55 MLAs Seek Cabinet Berth for First-Time Winners: H.A. Iqbal Hussain

RAMANAGARA

Ramanagara MLA H.A. Iqbal Hussain said that around 55 legislators have held a meeting demanding opportunities for first-time elected MLAs in the upcoming cabinet reshuffle. He stated that the matter has been brought to the attention of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister.

Speaking to reporters in Ramanagara city, MLA H.A. Iqbal Hussain revealed that a group of nearly 55 MLAs met and discussed the issue of cabinet expansion and representation. He pointed out that while senior legislators who have been elected multiple times have already held meetings and submitted their requests to the Chief Minister, first-time and second-time MLAs have also come together to present their case.

We have collectively discussed our demands and conveyed them to the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister. Around 55 of us met over a meal and deliberated on this issue in detail, he said. Hussain emphasized that fair representation should be given to new entrants in the Assembly, arguing that merit and fresh leadership should be recognized.

Citing precedents, he noted that Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar had been given a ministerial berth when he was elected for the first time. Similarly, Priyank Kharge had also become a minister after his first electoral victory. Based on these examples, we believe that first-time MLAs should also be given an opportunity in the cabinet, he added.

Hussain expressed confidence that the Chief Minister would respond positively to their request and consider their demands during the cabinet reshuffle process.

In addition to political matters, the MLA also spoke about the global situation, particularly the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict, and its impact on daily life. He highlighted that disruptions in supply have led to shortages of cooking gas, forcing some hotels to shut down temporarily. He also pointed out that common people are struggling to obtain domestic LPG cylinders.

Furthermore, he said that rising fuel prices, including petrol and diesel, have added to the burden on citizens and negatively affected various sectors and businesses. Hussain urged authorities to take necessary steps to address these challenges and ease the difficulties faced by the public.

MLA B.N. Ravi Kumar Joins Ramzan Celebrations at Eidgah Maidan

DLAGHATTA

Ramzan festival was celebrated with religious fervour in Dlaghatta town, where members of the Muslim community gathered for special prayers at the Eidgah Maidan. MLA B.N. Ravi Kumar visited the venue and extended his greetings, highlighting the spirit of unity and harmony.

The Eidgah Maidan in Dlaghatta town witnessed a large gathering of Muslim devotees who assembled to offer special prayers on the occasion of Ramzan. The celebrations were marked by devotion, discipline, and a strong sense of community, as people came together early in the morning to participate in the religious observances.

MLA B.N. Ravi Kumar visited the Eidgah Maidan during the prayers and greeted the members of the Muslim community. Interacting with the devotees, he conveyed his best wishes on the auspicious occasion and emphasized the importance of peace, brotherhood, and mutual respect in society. He stated that festivals like Ramzan play a vital role in strengthening communal harmony and fostering unity among people of different faiths.

Religious leaders led the prayers and delivered messages focusing on the core values of Ramzan, including compassion, charity, and self-discipline. Devotees offered prayers for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of society, reflecting the spiritual significance of the festival.

Local authorities and organizers ensured that proper arrangements were made for the smooth conduct of the event. Security personnel were deployed, and volunteers assisted in managing the large crowd, ensuring a peaceful and orderly gathering.

The presence of the MLA was appreciated by the local residents, who said it demonstrated inclusiveness and support for all communities. After the prayers, devotees exchanged greetings and celebrated the festival with joy and togetherness.

The Ramzan celebrations concluded peacefully, leaving behind a message of unity, faith, and goodwill in Dlaghatta town.

RAMZAN PRAYER PARTICIPATION

MLA N.Y. Gopalakrishna Participates in Ramzan Mass Prayer in Rampur

CHITRADURGA

MLA N.Y. Gopalakrishna participated in the mass prayer on the occasion of Ramzan at the Idga Maidan in Rampur village, joining hundreds of devotees in a display of faith, unity, and communal harmony. His presence at the gathering was widely appreciated by the local community.

The Ramzan mass prayer was held at the Idga Maidan in Rampur village, where a large number of people from the Muslim community gathered early in the morning to offer special prayers. The atmosphere was marked by devotion and discipline, as worshippers came together to mark the significance of the holy month, which emphasizes fasting, charity, and spiritual reflection.

MLA N.Y. Gopalakrishna attended the prayer gathering and extended his heartfelt greetings to the community on the occasion of Ramzan. Interacting with the devotees, he highlighted the importance of maintaining peace, harmony, and mutual respect among all sections of society. He stated that festivals like Ramzan play a vital role in strengthening social unity and spreading messages of compassion, kindness, and generosity. The MLA also appreciated the efforts of the organizers and local authorities in ensuring that the event was conducted smoothly and peacefully. Adequate arrangements were made at the venue to accommodate the large gathering, and volunteers were seen assisting attendees throughout the event.

Several local leaders, religious heads, and officials were present during the prayers, reflecting a spirit of inclusiveness and cooperation. The gathering served as an example of communal harmony, with people from different backgrounds coming together to share in the celebrations.

Residents of Rampur village expressed happiness over the MLA's participation, noting that such gestures by public representatives help build trust and strengthen bonds between communities. Many attendees said that his presence added significance to the occasion and encouraged a sense of unity.

The mass prayer concluded with prayers for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of the nation. The event underscored the essence of Ramzan as a time for reflection, togetherness, and goodwill among all.

QUICK READ

Student Selected for International Science Programme After Innovative Model

Shivamogga

A student from a government primary school in Shivamogga district has earned international recognition for developing an innovative scientific model, securing selection for a prestigious global science exchange programme.

Ganesh Havalagere, a student of a government higher primary school in Navanagar, Shivamogga district, has brought pride to the region by showcasing his talent in the field of science. His innovative project, titled Self-Operating Bed for Hospitals, received wide appreciation during a science exhibition conducted under the Inspire Award initiative. The model is designed to assist patients in adjusting their positions on a bed with minimal effort.

Veerupakshayya Hiremath Passes Away at 76

Gadag

Veerupakshayya Hiremath, who was residing near Manju Buddimandya School close to Khadi Plot in Narasapur village, Gadag taluk, breathed due to age-related ailments. His demise has saddened family members, friends, and residents of the locality who remembered him as a respected elder in the community. Known for his simple lifestyle and cordial nature, Hiremath had built strong relationships within the village over the years. Neighbours and acquaintances expressed grief over his passing and paid tributes, recalling his contributions to the community and his warm interactions with people from all walks of life. He is survived by his wife, a daughter, two sons, and grandchildren, along with a large number of relatives and well-wishers.

The family has been receiving condolences from members of the community and relatives since the news of his demise spread.

7th District Sharana Sahitya Sammelana in Shivamogga on March 24–25

The 7th District Sharana Sahitya Sammelana will be held in Shivamogga on March 24 and 25 at Kuvempu Rangamandira, bringing together scholars, seers, and literature enthusiasts to reflect on contemporary issues through Vachana literature

SHIVAMOGGA

Announcing the event at a press conference held at Basava Kendra, former MLC S. Rudregowda said that the two-day literary conference is being organized by the Akhila Bharata Sharana Sahitya Parishat, Shivamogga district unit, in association with various organizations and Vachana followers of the city. The theme of the Sammelana will be Present Challenges – Answers in Vachanas, aiming to explore solutions to modern-day problems through the teachings of Sharana literature.

The Sammelana will be presided over by Sri Mallikarjuna Murugharajendra Mahaswamiji of Bekkinakal Mutt, Shivamogga, who will serve as the president of the conference. The inaugural ceremony will be held on March 24 at 10:00 AM, in the divine presence of Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji of Suttur Mutt. Organizers described his presence as a matter of pride for the people of Shivamogga, considering the Mutt's contributions to the promotion of Sharana literature across the country.

The event will be inaugurated by Dr. C. Somashekar, President of the Akhila Bharata Sharana Sahitya Parishat. Several dignitaries, including School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa, MP B.Y. Raghavendra, and Kuvempu University Vice-Chancellor Sharath Ananthamurthy, are expected to attend.

District Sharana Sahitya Parishat President H.N. Maharudra said that the symbolic Akkamahadevi Jyoti will arrive in a procession from Udutadi in Shikaripura taluk. It will be received at Akkamahadevi Circle in Shivamogga before proceeding to the venue after offering floral tributes to the Basaveshwara statue.

The Sammelana will feature various panel discussions, literary sessions, and daily Vachana recitals over the two days. The valedictory function on March 25 will be held in the presence of Sri Panchama Shivalingeshwara Mahaswamiji of Nidasosi Mutt, with noted academic Dr. M.S. Ashadevi delivering the concluding address.

Several prominent leaders, including MLA B.Y. Vijayendra and Vice-Chancellor Dr. R.C. Jagadeesh, are also expected to participate. Organizers anticipate the participation of over a thousand Sharana followers, making the event a significant platform for promoting inclusive and value-based discourse inspired by the teachings of Basavanna and other Sharanas.

Traffic Police Fine Excise Department Vehicle for Causing Obstruction

SHIVAMOGGA

In a notable incident highlighting strict enforcement of traffic rules, Shivamogga traffic police registered a case and imposed a fine on an Excise Department vehicle for causing inconvenience to the public by obstructing the road

The incident occurred near Ayanur Gate Circle on Sagar Road in Shivamogga, where a vehicle belonging to the Excise Department (KA-01 G-5787) was reportedly parked in the middle of the road, disrupting the smooth movement of traffic. The driver had allegedly halted the vehicle in a manner that blocked other vehicles, leading to inconvenience for commuters passing through the busy stretch.

According to eyewitnesses, when members of the public questioned the driver about the obstruction, he reportedly responded dismissively, stating that it was a government vehicle and that officials had gone for inspection. He further insisted that the vehicle would not be moved until the officials returned. Despite repeated requests from the public to clear the road, the driver allegedly refused to cooperate.

Frustrated by the situation, locals immediately alerted the traffic police. Acting swiftly, Traffic Inspector Devaraju reached the spot within five minutes of receiving the complaint. He ensured that the obstructing vehicle was moved from the road and restored normal traffic flow in the area. Following this, the traffic police registered a case against the vehicle and imposed a fine on the driver for violating traffic rules. The prompt action taken by Inspector Devaraju and his team was widely appreciated by the public, who lauded the department for its responsiveness and impartial enforcement.

The incident sends a clear message that traffic rules apply equally to all, including government vehicles, and that no one is exempt from adhering to road safety regulations. Authorities reiterated that strict action will be taken against any violations that inconvenience the public or disrupt traffic flow.

Mass Protest Planned in B'luru Against Industrial Pollution

KOPPAL

The issue, which initially affected a limited number of residents, has now amplified into a large-scale public campaign. Activists note that when a single voice speaks, it may go unheard, but when thousands unite, the message resonates across the state and beyond.

Over the past months, this collective outcry has gained traction through discussions in media platforms, public forums, and social networks, especially since 2024.

The immediate trigger for the protest is the alleged environmental damage caused by industrial units operating in and around Koppal.

Residents claim that emissions and waste from these factories have severely impacted local air, water, and soil quality. Concerns over public health have intensified, with reports suggesting a rise in illnesses linked to pollution.

Emphasising the importance of leading a purposeful and value-driven life, Rambhapuri Peetha seer Shri Jagadguru Dr. Veerasomeshwara Shivacharya Bhagavadpada urged people to cultivate humanity and work towards self-realisation through righteous living

Strive for Self-Realisation Through a Meaningful Life, Says Rambhapuri Seer

DHARWAD

The seer was speaking at a Dharma Jagruti Samavesha held as part of the annual Jatra Mahotsava of Shri Gurushantalinga Shivayogi at the Sansthan Panchagruha Hiremath in Amminabhavi village of Dharwad taluk. Addressing the gathering, he highlighted that human life is precious and should not be wasted in ignorance or aimless pursuits. He advised individuals to first learn to become compassionate human beings by embracing moral values and wishing well for all living beings. According to him, a truly meaningful life is one that leaves a lasting impression on society and contributes positively to the welfare of others.

Stressing spiritual awareness, the seer said that every moment of life should be lived with mindfulness and reflection. He cautioned that human birth, considered rare and sacred, should not be lost without purpose. Instead, individuals must remain conscious of their actions and strive to move towards the path of liberation.

He further underlined the importance of guidance from enlightened gurus, stating that spiritual wisdom acts as a light that leads individuals from worldly distractions to higher realisation. By following the teachings of gurus and adhering to righteous conduct, one can transform life into a journey of fulfilment and inner peace.

The event witnessed participation from devotees, scholars, and local residents, who gathered to seek spiritual guidance and blessings. The discourse served as a reminder of the enduring relevance of ethical values and spirituality in modern life, encouraging people to pursue a balanced path that harmonises worldly responsibilities with spiritual growth.

Career Guidance Fair to Be Held in Dharwad for Students

DHARWAD

A career guidance fair and skill education exhibition will be held on March 26, 2026, in Dharwad to help students make informed decisions about their future education and employment opportunities.

The initiative is part of the Samagra Shiksha Karnataka programme for the academic year 2025–26, under which career guidance cells are being established in 34 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) across the state. As part of this effort, the event will be hosted at the Government Teacher Training Institute in Dharwad.

The fair aims to guide high school and pre-university students by providing them with detailed information about various career paths based on their interests and abilities. Experts and representatives from multiple sectors will offer insights into emerging fields, skill development programmes, and job-oriented courses.

Participants will also be introduced to various government schemes related to skill development, self-employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship support. The event will highlight local employment prospects and provide clarity on which sectors are expected to generate more job opportunities in the future.

Several reputed institutions, including skill development organisations, ITIs, polytechnics, and universities such as Karnataka University and agricultural universities, will participate in the fair. They will offer guidance on available courses, admission processes, and career prospects, ensuring that students receive comprehensive information under one roof.

Officials stated that in today's competitive environment, students often face confusion while choosing the right career path due to the wide range of options available. The establishment of career guidance centres aims to address this challenge by offering structured support and reliable information.

The programme is expected to benefit students of Class 10 and pre-university levels by helping them understand their strengths and make well-informed career choices. Authorities have encouraged students and parents to actively participate in the event to take full advantage of the guidance and opportunities provided.

Skill Development Pact Signed Between Training Centre and Siddhartha Academy

TUMAKURU

In a significant step towards enhancing technical education and employment opportunities, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Government Tool Room and Training Centre and Siddhartha Academy of Higher Education (SAHE), Tumakuru.

The agreement aims to strengthen skill development, research collaboration, and innovation in the fields of technology and engineering. The MoU was formally signed during a meeting held at Siddhartha Academy of Higher Education, where representatives from both institutions discussed future cooperation and academic partnerships.

Under this collaboration, both institutions will jointly design and implement skill-oriented training programs to equip students with industry-relevant competencies. The initiative seeks to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical industry requirements by introducing advanced training modules, internships, certification courses, and industrial visits.

Officials highlighted that the partnership would create greater employment opportunities for students by aligning education with evolving industry needs. The collaboration will also facilitate knowledge exchange between faculty members, promote joint seminars, workshops, and conferences, and support research-based learning.

Dr. K.B. Lingegowda, Vice Chancellor of Siddhartha Academy of Higher Education, and Mahesh Reddy, Principal of the Government Tool Room and Training Centre, signed the MoU and expressed optimism about the outcomes of the partnership. They emphasised that the agreement would play a crucial role in empowering students with technical expertise and preparing them for competitive job markets.

The institutions also plan to organise virtual lectures, project exhibitions, and internship programs to provide hands-on experience to students. By integrating academic knowledge with industrial exposure, the initiative is expected to significantly boost employability and innovation among learners.

Several senior faculty members, academic coordinators, and department heads were present during the signing ceremony, marking the beginning of a collaborative effort to advance technical education in the region.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mariya Reshma W/o. Prem Vilson.S R/o.Basavanagudi Street, Pandavapura Town My original sale deed dated 05-05-2004 in respect of the property assessment No.B-118, measuring 30 X 20 feet the said property situated at Pandavapura Town, Mandya District as document No.PDP-1-00208-2004- 05, CD No.PDPD3, I was lost the said sale deed on 19- 03-2026 at Pandavapura in this connection I filed the complaint before the Consent Police Station in this connection endorsement issued on 19-03-2026 if any one trace please intimates me or said Police within 7 days. By M.Guruprasad, Advocate, No.2, M.Lingaiah Building, V.V.Road, Mandya-571401. Mob:9242221603.

TEMPLE FOUNDATION CEREMONY

Foundation Stone Laid for New Temple

DHARWAD

A foundation stone laying ceremony for a new temple dedicated to Goddess Bhramaramba Devi was held in Dharwad, marking a significant spiritual development for the local community.

The ceremony took place near Basaveshwara Hospital premises, adjacent to the Mallikarjuna Temple complex. The ritual Bhoomi Pooja was conducted with traditional religious practices and devotion, symbolising the commencement of construction of the new temple structure.

The sacred ceremony was performed under the divine guidance and blessings of Dr. M.N. Prabhu, along with revered spiritual leader Shri Gurupadalinga Mahashivayogi. The rituals were carried out in accordance with established customs, invoking divine grace for the successful completion of the temple project.

Several prominent members of the community and organizing committee were present on the occasion. Among them were Welfare Society President Mallinath Deshmukh, Secretary Shivaraj Andagi, and key members including Gurulingayya Mathapati, Basavantraya Jabashetti, Vishwanath Ratkal, Basavaraj Punyashetti, Nagabhushan Hindoddi, Virupakshappa Kiranagi, Shantayya Bidimani, Kashinath Chinmalli, Udaykumar Padashetti, Nagaraj Hebbal, Aravindkumar Patil, Amritrao Annoor, and Mallikarjun Kale.

In addition, office bearers of the Akkamahadevi Women's Trust and devotees from Pragati Colony and Badepur Colony actively participated in the ceremony, reflecting strong community involvement and support for the initiative.

The construction of the Bhramaramba Devi temple is expected to serve as a spiritual centre for devotees in the region, promoting religious harmony and cultural values. The organizers expressed gratitude to all attendees and supporters who contributed to the successful of the event.

QUICK READ

Student shot dead on Varanasi college campus

VARANASI

A 23-year-old student was shot dead by a fellow student inside a college campus, sparking protests and raising safety concerns. The victim, Surya Pratap Singh, was attacked in a corridor of Uday Pratap College. The accused, Manjeet Chauhan, allegedly fired multiple rounds before fleeing. Singh later died in hospital. Police said the incident was due to personal rivalry. Angry students vandalised property and locked gates. A case has been filed, and police teams are searching for the absconding accused.

Man dies after Kolkata hospital lift tragedy

KOLKATA

A 40-year-old man died after getting trapped in a malfunctioning lift at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. The victim, Arup Banerjee, was stuck with his wife and young son for nearly an hour. While trying to force the lift doors open, he suffered fatal crush injuries. His wife and son had minor injuries. Police arrested five staff members, including guards and lift operators. The family alleged negligence and delay in rescue. Authorities have started an investigation into safety lapses.

Intralogistics & Warehousing Expo 2026 from May 14

MUMBAI

The Intralogistics & Warehousing Expo 2026 will be held from May 14 to 16 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre. Organised by Future Market Events, the fifth edition will bring together industry leaders from logistics and supply chain sectors. Over 275 exhibitors will showcase more than 1,500 products, including automation and robotics solutions. The event will run alongside two expos and feature key conferences on supply chain trends. Experts and CEOs will discuss challenges, innovation, and future opportunities in the sector.

PM Modi speaks with Iran Prez, condemns attacks on critical infra

Modi emphasised the need to maintain peace and ensure smooth functioning of economic activities

Continued from page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday held a phone conversation with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, discussing the current security situation in West Asia and extending greetings on Eid and Nowruz.

During the call, Modi strongly condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, stating that such actions threaten stability and disrupt global supply chains. He emphasised the need to maintain peace and ensure smooth functioning of economic activities.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and keeping key shipping routes open and secure. He noted that disruptions in these routes could impact global trade and energy supplies, affecting several countries, including India.

Modi appreciated Iran's continued support in ensuring the safety and security of Indian nationals residing in the country. Both leaders also discussed the ongoing tensions in the region and the need for dialogue and diplomacy to resolve conflicts.

The two leaders had earlier spoken on March 12, when Modi expressed concern over rising tensions and the loss of civilian lives. He had reiterated India's stand that issues should be resolved through peaceful means.

Following these discussions, Iran allowed India-flagged vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, ensuring smoother transit of goods and energy supplies.

Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has been in touch with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, discussing regional security, shipping safety, and bilateral cooperation.

Global leaders have also indicated that India could play a constructive role in easing tensions in the region through diplomatic efforts and dialogue.

Raut alleges election manipulation, questions EC neutrality

NEW DELHI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday made serious allegations about India's electoral process, claiming that elections are being manipulated and influenced through unfair means.

Speaking to reporters, he questioned the credibility of the system and called for international observers to examine how elections are conducted in the country.

Raut criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statements about India's democratic strength on global platforms.

He urged organisations like the United Nations to send teams to assess the situation on the ground, alleging that elections are no longer free or fair.

He claimed that since the current leadership came to power, irregularities have increased in elections at all levels.

According to Raut, traditional malpractices like booth capturing have been replaced by modern methods such as misuse of money, power, and alleged manipulation of voter lists. He also raised concerns about the role of the Election Commission, claiming that it is no longer functioning as an independent body.

Referring to West Bengal, Raut alleged that administrative decisions and large-scale transfers of officials point to undue interference.

He described the situation as similar to an undeclared emergency and warned that such actions could affect the fairness of elections.

UAE Envoy reassures Indians amid ongoing conflict

NEW DELHI

UAE ambassador assures Indian community of safety, stability, and uninterrupted services, highlighting strong economic ties and resilience despite ongoing regional tensions and attacks.

UAE Ambassador to India Abdulnasser Alshaali has reassured the Indian community in the United Arab Emirates of their safety and security amid the ongoing West Asia conflict. In an open letter issued on the occasion of Eid, he stressed the country's resilience and its strong partnership with India.

The envoy said that despite repeated attacks, including over 2,000 missiles and drones launched by Iran, the UAE has maintained stability through strong defence systems. He noted that most threats were successfully intercepted, ensuring minimal disruption. Essential services such as energy, healthcare, water, and food supply have continued without interruption.

He also highlighted that business activity across the UAE remains normal. Airports, ports, hotels, and shopping centres are functioning smoothly, while the banking sector remains strong. Strategic food reserves are sufficient to meet several months of demand, ensuring public confidence.

Alshaali emphasised the deep-rooted relationship between India and the UAE, stating that Indians are not just expatriates but an integral part of the country's social and economic fabric. He noted that millions of Indians live and work in the UAE, contributing significantly to its growth across sectors.

The ambassador further said that the UAE remains open for business, with supply chains intact and economic infrastructure stable.

Bilateral trade between India and the UAE has crossed USD 100 billion, supported by the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

He also acknowledged India's continued engagement during the crisis and assured that both governments are committed to protecting the interests and well-being of Indians living in the UAE.

Court seeks CBI reply on Bitcoin scam bail

NEW DELHI

A Rouse Avenue Court has asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to file its reply on the bail application of Ayush Varshney, who is accused in a Rs 20,000 crore bitcoin scam. The court has scheduled the matter for further arguments on March 25.

Varshney, an IIT topper and co-founder of a company, is presently lodged in judicial custody until March 30. He was earlier taken into custody by the CBI when he was allegedly attempting to leave the country for Sri Lanka. His arrest followed the issuance of a lookout circular to prevent him from fleeing. The case is connected to the Gain Bitcoin scheme, which began in 2015. According to investigators, the scheme promised investors returns of up to 10 percent, attracting a large number of participants. Officials have alleged that the operation was led by Amit Bharadwaj, who has since passed away, along with his brother Ajay Bharadwaj and a network of associates. Authorities have registered multiple FIRs related to the alleged fraud. Alongside the CBI probe, the Enforcement Directorate is also conducting a parallel investigation into the financial aspects of the case.

RAJNATH SINGH HIGHLIGHTS EVOLVING WARFARE, STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF ENERGY, CYBER, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY TODAY

Energy security threats now part of modern warfare: Singh

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said modern warfare has changed significantly, with threats now extending beyond borders to include economic, digital, energy, and food security.

Addressing the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Sainik School Ghorakhal virtually, he said nations can be weakened through cyber, space, and information warfare. He stressed that both a strong military and alert citizens are essential to safeguard the country in today's complex security environment.

He said the government, led by Narendra Modi, is strengthening the armed forces with advanced weapons and technology. At the same time, he urged youth to build discipline, mental strength, and clear thinking to face emerging challenges.

Referring to the concept of VUCA, meaning volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous situations, he encouraged students to adopt values like vision, understanding, courage, and adaptability to deal with modern-day issues.

Highlighting initiatives for youth, he said the government plans to set up 100 new Sainik Schools under a public-private partnership model. He also noted that the intake capacity of the National Cadet Corps has been increased from 17 lakh to 20 lakh cadets.

He described the inclusion of girls in Sainik Schools as a major step towards strengthening women's participation. He expressed confidence that students will continue to uphold discipline and contribute to the nation's growth.

The school has produced over 800 cadets for the National Defence Academy and more than 2,000 personnel for the armed forces.

Kerala court awards life term in doc murder case

KOLLAM

A court in Kerala has sentenced Sandeep, a school teacher, to life imprisonment for the murder of young doctor Vandana Das inside a hospital.

The Kollam Additional District and Sessions Court also awarded a total of 30 years' jail for other offences, after which the life term will begin.

The prosecution said it will appeal for the death penalty, stating that it had earlier sought the maximum punishment. However, the court did not consider the case as "rarest of rare." The victim's family expressed mixed feelings, calling the verdict a relief but not complete justice. They also plan to seek stricter punishment.

The incident took place on May 10, 2023, at a taluk hospital in Kottarakkara. Sandeep, who had been brought there by police for treatment of a leg injury, suddenly attacked people with surgical scissors. He first assaulted police personnel and others present before turning on Dr Vandana Das. The young doctor, who was on duty as part of her training, was stabbed multiple times and later died in a hospital in Thiruvananthapuram.

INS Taragiri boosts India's indigenous naval defence strength

NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy is set to commission its latest stealth frigate, INS Taragiri, on April 3, marking an important milestone in the country's efforts to strengthen self-reliance in defence manufacturing. The commissioning ceremony will be presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, highlighting the significance of the occasion.

INS Taragiri is the fourth vessel developed under the advanced Project 17A programme and comes with several technological improvements over earlier ships. The 6,670-tonne warship has been constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited in Mumbai and reflects a strong focus on indigenous production, with more than 75 percent of its components sourced within the country.

The project has also involved the participation of over 200 micro, small and medium enterprises, contributing to domestic industry growth and employment.

The frigate is powered by a Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) propulsion system, enabling it to achieve high speeds while also supporting long-duration missions at sea. It is equipped with a range of modern weapons and sensors, including advanced missile systems and anti-submarine warfare capabilities, making it well-suited for complex maritime operations.

In addition to its combat role, INS Taragiri is designed to undertake humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, showcasing its versatility.

Its induction into the Navy underlines India's growing capability to design and build sophisticated warships, reinforcing the country's position as a strong and self-reliant maritime power.

'CLEAN GANGA REMAINS ON PAPER'

BJP betrayed Ganga Maiya: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has intensified his criticism of the BJP, terming it a party of "thieves, goons, and traitors".

Referring to comments made by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Yadav added that the BJP has also "betrayed" Ganga Maiya by failing to fulfill its promise to clean the river.

He questioned how large sums of money allocated for cleaning the Ganges River were spent and recalled the demolition at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi. Yadav also expressed strong confidence in Banerjee's leadership, saying she could win elections in West Bengal even if she contests alone.

He further alleged that in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP benefited from the support of officials aligned with them, claiming that election outcomes were influenced by such backing. In contrast, he said officials were not removed when the BJP came to power in the state.

Opposition leaders intensify attack on BJP

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee sharply criticized the BJP, accusing it of betrayal, misuse of funds, and undermining rights, while asserting confidence in defeating the party in upcoming elections and calling for unity.

On the possibility of a cabinet expansion in Uttar Pradesh, Yadav dismissed it as "political drama."

He asserted that the Samajwadi Party is gearing up to remove the BJP from power in the 2027 elections, saying such moves by the ruling party would not make a difference.

Meanwhile, Mamata Banerjee, speaking at an Eid gathering in Kolkata, launched a strong attack on the BJP-led central government.

She accused it of undermining people's rights, particularly over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) issue, and vowed to continue her fight against it. She also alleged attempts to impose President's Rule in West Bengal but insisted her government would not be intimidated.

Banerjee reiterated her sharp criticism, calling the BJP a "party of thieves, goons, and traitors," and warned against efforts to divide voters. She emphasized unity across communities and said her struggle is aimed at protecting the rights of the people.

QUICK READ

Pak Railways caps concessions at 50% amid austerity drive

Islamabad

Pakistan Railways has introduced a new policy cutting many passenger concessions. The move limits fare discounts to a maximum of 50%, down from previously higher relief in some categories. Passengers will also be restricted to 10 concessional single journeys per year. Premium trains like Green Line, Pak Business, and Shah Hussain Express will no longer offer discounts. The 50% concession for spouses has been completely removed, sparking public concern. Officials say the changes aim to standardize and control concession use.

Muslims in Nepal celebrate Eid-Al-Fitr with pomp and gaiety

Kathmandu

Hundreds gathered at Jame Mosque in Nepal to celebrate Eid-Al-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan. Devotees offered mass Namaz, exchanged greetings, and shared sweet dishes with friends and family. The festival emphasizes patience, charity, and self-discipline, while fostering unity and social harmony. Attendees also practiced generosity by helping the poor and needy. Wearing new clothes, embracing loved ones, and offering gifts added to the festive spirit. The government declared a public holiday. Eid-Al-Fitr celebrates both religious devotion and community togetherness, promoting empathy, kindness, and cultural solidarity, while reminding people of values like fraternity, compassion, and social responsibility.

Tehran does not seek war with neighboring countries: Prez

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian calls for regional harmony, dialogue, and cooperation during Nowruz and Ramadan celebrations

TEHRAN

As the vibrant colors of Nowruz and the spiritual peace of Ramadan fill the air, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has issued a heartfelt plea for harmony.

Speaking during a time of national reflection, the leader emphasized that Iran has no desire for conflict with its neighbors. Instead, he reached out a hand of friendship to nearby nations, calling them "brothers."

The President's message comes during a somber period. He shared deep condolences over the passing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, following recent military strikes. Despite these heavy losses and rising tensions now entering their fourth week, Pezeshkian urged his citizens to remain calm and united. He moved away from talk of war, focusing instead on the power of conversation.

In a bold move for regional stability, Pezeshkian proposed a new "Islamic Assembly of the Middle East." This group would allow neighboring countries to work together on trade, culture,

and safety without needing help from outside powers. He argued that when Muslim nations argue, only their enemies win. By creating a shared security plan, he believes the region can finally find lasting peace.

While he was firm in his criticism of Israel's role in local unrest, his main goal remained clear: cooperation over confrontation. He promised that Iran would not interfere in the private business of other countries. As the holiday season continues, his message serves as a reminder that even in difficult times, dialogue is the best way to solve old misunderstandings.

'Winning war faster pace than anticipated'

Terming Iran as the head of the snake for global terrorism, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Saturday said through President Trump's Operation Epic Fury, the US-Israel are winning this critical fight at an even faster pace than anticipated. In response to Iran's terrorist attacks against global energy infrastructure, the Trump Administration will continue to deploy America's economic and military might to maximize the flow of energy to the world, strengthen global supply, and seek to ensure market stability, he stated in an X post. "President Trump's pro-energy agenda has driven US oil and gas production to record levels, strengthening energy security and lowering fuel costs, his post reads. Any short-term disruption now will ultimately translate into longer-term economic gains for Americans – because there is no prosperity without security," he added.

Switzerland halts US arms exports amid Iran war

BERN

Switzerland has officially halted all weapon exports to the United States due to the intensifying conflict involving Iran. Government officials announced that their long-standing policy of neutrality prevents them from sending military equipment to any nation currently engaged in active warfare. This bold move comes as the conflict enters its third week, causing a severe humanitarian crisis and driving up global energy costs. Beyond blocking arms, Switzerland has also restricted its airspace. While three flights were permitted, authorities recently rejected two American requests to fly over Swiss territory to maintain their impartial stance. Swiss law strictly controls the trade of military technology, requiring officials to consider human rights and international balance before approving sales. Since February 28, no new licenses have been granted to the U.S. Experts are now reviewing existing permits for dual-use goods to ensure they align with these tight regulations. Last year, the U.S. was a major customer, buying $119 million in Swiss arms. However, Switzerland has a firm history of cutting off supplies during wars, having previously restricted sales to Israel and Ukraine. Leaders insist they will continue to monitor the situation to protect their reputation as a neutral peacekeeper.

India sends 2.5 tons of emergency aid to Kabul

KABUL

Following a devastating airstrike that shook the city of Kabul earlier this week, India has stepped forward with vital support.

A shipment containing 2.5 tons of emergency medical aid was dispatched to help those suffering in the aftermath of the tragedy. This relief package includes essential medicines and high-tech equipment to support hospitals currently struggling to treat hundreds of wounded patients.

The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed the move, stating that India stands firmly in solidarity with the Afghan people during this dark hour. The disaster occurred on March 16 when an airstrike hit a drug rehabilitation center. Reports from Afghan officials indicate a staggering loss of life, with over 400 people killed and 250 others injured. Many victims were patients and healthcare workers who were simply at the facility for treatment and care.

Local hospitals in Kabul have been completely overwhelmed by the sudden influx of casualties. International leaders and human rights groups have expressed deep shock, calling for an immediate investigation into the event to ensure humanitarian laws are respected. While the situation has caused immense grief, there is a small glimmer of hope for peace.

Both sides have agreed to a temporary pause in military actions to honor the upcoming Eid al-Fitr holidays. This brief ceasefire comes after requests from several neighboring countries. India's timely aid serves as a reminder that even amidst high regional tensions, helping innocent civilians remains a top priority for the global community.

US lawmakers counter China's growing global influence

WASHINGTON, DC [US]

A bipartisan group of US lawmakers has introduced new legislation to investigate China's expanding global influence, reflecting growing concern in Washington over Beijing's coordinated efforts worldwide. The proposed law, called the Combating Chinese Communist Party Influence Act, would require the Director of National Intelligence to assess the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) foreign influence activities and their impact on US national security.

Representative Derek Tran, who introduced the bill, said the legislation aims to provide policymakers with clear, evidence-based insights into China's tactics. "This intelligence is essential to protecting American interests, alliances, and economic stability," he said. Co-sponsors include Representatives Don Bacon, Marilyn Strickland, and Pat Harrigan, highlighting strong bipartisan support.

Lawmakers argue that China's global reach has grown in recent years, especially in Latin America, Africa, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific. Beijing has become a major trade partner and lender in Latin America, with Chinese firms controlling strategic ports, such as Peru's Chancay megaport, under the Belt and Road Initiative. Critics say these investments go beyond economics, aiming to expand geopolitical influence.

Harrigan warned that the CCP is undermining US influence by manipulating financial systems and weakening trust in democratic institutions. Under the bill, the intelligence community would have 180 days to report on CCP-linked activities dating back to January 2023. The assessment would examine effects on US alliances, global financial systems, and international perceptions of Washington. The legislation signals a firm US effort to monitor and counter China's influence globally, ensuring that American strategic, economic, and political interests are safeguarded amid an increasingly complex international landscape.

BUSINESS

SEOUL WORKS TO CLEAR VITAL OIL ROUTE

South Korea negotiates reopening Strait of Hormuz amid energy crisis, aiming to secure oil shipments and stabilize regional supply

SEOUL

South Korean officials are working overtime to reopen a critical shipping lane as a global energy crisis looms.

Following a tense blockade in the Middle East, Seoul is now in active talks with Iran and other nations to ensure cargo ships can safely pass through the Strait of Hormuz once again.

The move comes after Iran hinted at a breakthrough. Iranian leaders recently suggested that ships headed for Japan might soon be allowed through the narrow waterway, which has been virtually shut down due to rising military conflict. This small opening has given South Korea hope that its own essential oil tankers might be next in line for safe passage.

The stakes could not be higher for local families and businesses. More than 20 percent of the world's oil flows through this specific route. Because the shipping lanes sit within Iranian waters, the recent shutdown sparked fears of soaring fuel prices and energy shortages across East Asia.

While South Korea joined several European nations in criticizing recent Gulf attacks, the government's main focus remains on protecting its citizens and securing the nation's energy supply.

Meanwhile, overseas, US President Donald Trump indicated that American military operations in the region might soon "wind down" as specific goals are met. He has called on South Korea and its neighbors to take a larger role in keeping the seas safe. For now, Seoul remains hopeful that diplomacy will prevail, keeping the lights on and the ships moving.

Fact-file

* South Korea imports 12% of the oil flowing through the Strait of Hormuz, making them highly vulnerable to the disruptions caused by Iran war.

* US President Donald Trump has requested that allies, including South Korea, send ships to help clear the Hormuz blockade.

* As per country's Defence Minister Ahn Gyu-back sending a warship to the blocked region would require parliamentary approval.

QUICK READ

Bharat Electricity Summit: India-Africa forge energy alliance

New Delhi

India and Africa are strengthening cooperation in renewable energy, grid modernization, and energy storage, Power Minister Manohar Lal said at the Bharat Electricity Summit. He highlighted projects like the Kenya transmission initiative and the International Solar Alliance as examples of innovation, public-private partnerships, and technical expertise. Ministers emphasized the goal of reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy to drive inclusive growth. Africa50 CEO Alain Ebobisse said the focus is on investment for impact, not aid. Haryana's Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also stressed effective water management.

India's industrial, warehousing stock crosses half billion sq ft

Mumbai

India's industrial and warehousing space has crossed 0.5 billion square feet, a report by Knight Frank India shows. The stock rose 13% from 486 million sq ft in 2024 to 549 million sq ft by December 2025. Mumbai leads with 170 million sq ft, driven by ports, logistics, and demand from manufacturing and retail sectors, while Delhi-NCR follows with 115 million sq ft, benefiting from connectivity and industrial growth. The eight major markets hold 256 million sq ft of potential space, providing capacity for future expansion.

Indian firms launch cheaper Diabetes drug versions

NEW DELHI

Millions of patients fighting diabetes and obesity received great news as three major Indian drug companies launched affordable versions of a popular injection.

Following the expiration of a key patent, Sun Pharma, Zydus Lifesciences, and Dr. Reddy's Laboratories have released generic semaglutide, significantly cutting treatment costs for families across the nation.

These new options arrived just one day after Natco Pharma introduced its own version for around 1,290 rupees per month. Sun Pharma is offering different brands tailored for weight loss and blood sugar control, with weekly prices starting as low as 750 rupees. Meanwhile, Zydus has introduced a reusable pen device to help patients manage their health easily at home, and Dr. Reddy's has launched a prefilled disposable version.

This breakthrough is a major step for India's healthcare.

Semaglutide is a proven medicine that helps the body manage sugar and weight, but high prices often kept it out of reach. By producing these "generic" versions, Indian companies are making life-saving science accessible to the common man.

The launch also highlights India's growing power as the "pharmacy of the world." The nation currently ranks third globally in medicine production volume, exporting to over 200 countries. With strong government support, the pharmaceutical industry is expected to double in value to 130 billion dollars by 2030. Today's news proves that Indian innovation is not just about business growth, but about providing cheaper, effective care for patients everywhere.

India-Bhutan link postal payments system

NEW DELHI

Sending money across borders is about to become much easier and cheaper for citizens in India and Bhutan.

The two neighboring nations have announced a landmark digital partnership that will connect their postal networks using India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI). This move marks another major step in taking India's home-grown payment technology to the global stage.

By integrating the Universal Postal Union's transfer system with UPI, the new initiative aims to make financial services accessible to everyone, even in remote areas. A formal agreement was signed between India Post and Bhutan Post, creating a solid framework for the two countries to work together on technology, logistics, and digital mapping.

This partnership isn't just about money; it is about building a modern, high-tech bridge between two old friends.

The collaboration also focuses heavily on people. Bhutanese postal officials will soon travel to India for advanced training in modern mail management and emerging technologies. India has also offered to share its expertise in "financial inclusion," showing how post offices can help regular families save money and access banking services easily.

Beyond digital payments, the two countries plan to cooperate on cultural projects, including colorful stamp exhibitions. As India's pharmaceutical and tech sectors continue to boom, this postal deal ensures that the benefits of innovation reach the doorsteps of common citizens in both nations. This friendly alliance proves that simple, smart technology can truly change lives.

Pakistan pays millions monthly for empty pipes

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan is facing a tough financial squeeze as it continues to pay over $15 million every month for gas terminals that aren't even being used.

Even though a major supplier, QatarEnergy, stopped shipments earlier this month due to "unforeseen circumstances," the bills keep coming. Every single day, the cash-strapped nation hands over about $538,535 to private terminal operators.

The problem lies in old contracts that force the government to pay fixed fees regardless of whether any gas actually flows. While state companies have tried to pause their own obligations, these private agreements remain locked in. Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik criticized the deals as "faulty," noting they do not serve the public interest. So far, the country has spent nearly $3 billion just on these capacity charges.

This waste comes at a painful time for ordinary citizens. With a slowing economy, high poverty, and millions of children out of school, every dollar counts. Experts warn that paying for "ghost gas" is draining the national budget when the money is desperately needed elsewhere. As the energy crisis deepens, leaders are under pressure to fix these structural weaknesses before the country's fragile economy slips further away.

Several Sandalwood stars rose from television to successful cinema careers

SANDALWOOD STARS Who Began Their Journey From Television Industry

Many leading actors of the Kannada film industry, popularly known as Sandalwood, first appeared on television before making a strong mark in cinema. Stars like Kiccha Sudeep, Yash, Darshan and Ganesh began their careers with serials and shows, proving that television has been an important platform for talent.

Kiccha Sudeep started with the serial Premada Kadambari and later entered films with supporting roles. His big breakthrough came with the 2001 movie Huchcha, which earned him fame and the nickname Kiccha. Over the years, he has remained one of the industry's most consistent stars.

Yash, also known as the Rocking Star, began with the serial Nanda Gokula, where he acted alongside his future wife Radhika Pandit. He later worked in several shows before entering films. His rise to national fame came with the blockbuster KGF series, which made him a pan-India star.

Ganesh gained popularity as the host of the comedy show Comedy Time. He later found massive success in films with Mungaru Male, which became a blockbuster and established him as a leading actor.

Among actresses, Rachita Ram began with the serial Arasi and rose to fame with her debut film Bulbul. Veteran actor Prakash Raj also started with television before building a successful career across multiple film industries. Darshan, who appeared in small television roles, became a star after his film Majestic. These journeys highlight television as a strong stepping stone for cinema success.

Nayanthara Tops Richest South Indian Actresses List In 2026

The South Indian film industry is witnessing a major shift, with leading actresses emerging as strong bankable stars and earning impressive incomes. Topping the list in 2026 is Nayanthara, whose estimated net worth reportedly exceeds Rs 200 crore, making her the richest South Indian actress. Known for her powerful screen presence and consistent success, Nayanthara reportedly charges around Rs 10 crore per film and about Rs 5 crore per advertisement. Apart from acting, she has also invested in a production house and owns luxury properties in cities like Chennai, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. Reports suggest she even owns a private jet, reflecting her financial success.

Following her is Anushka Shetty, with an estimated net worth of over Rs 135 crore. Despite mixed box office results in recent films, she continues to remain a top name and is preparing for her Malayalam debut with Kathanar – The Wild Sorcerer.

Actors Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Tamannaah Bhatia also hold strong positions, with net worths estimated between Rs 110 crore and Rs 120 crore.

THAAI KIZHAVI
OTT Release Set For Mar 26 On JioHotstar

The Tamil village drama Thaai Kizhavi, starring veteran actress Radhika Sarathkumar, is all set for its OTT premiere on March 26. After a successful theatrical run, backed by Sivakarthikeyan Productions, the film grossed over Rs 72 crore worldwide and has been praised for giving a modern twist to the classic village drama genre. According to reports, the digital rights have been acquired by JioHotstar, allowing viewers to watch the acclaimed family entertainer from home. Released in theatres on February 27, the film completed a 20-day run, earning approximately Rs 75 crore globally. Radhika Sarathkumar plays Pavunuthai, a spirited and courageous matriarch from Usilampatti in Madurai district, delivering a performance lauded for its energy and emotional depth. Her portrayal, especially in the climax, highlights women's strength, independence, and voice, earning widespread appreciation.

Peddi Teaser Likely To Drop On Ram Charan's Birthday

Fans of Ram Charan are eagerly awaiting the teaser for his upcoming sports action drama Peddi, which is expected to release on his birthday, March 27.

Reports suggest the teaser, titled Kushti, could give audiences a first glimpse of the film, though the makers have yet to officially confirm the date.

Directed by Buchi Babu Sana, the movie revolves around a village cricket tournament and features Janhvi Kapoor in her second Telugu outing. She appears as Achiyamma, bringing a lively and cheerful presence to the rural setting. The cast also includes Shiva Rajkumar, Divyendu Sharma, Jagapathi Babu, and Boman Irani.

The music of the film is composed by AR Rahman, with two songs already released: the upbeat tracks Chikri Chikri and Rai Rai Raa Raa, which highlight the film's fun and energetic vibe.

Originally scheduled for a March 27 release, the film's theatrical debut has now been pushed to April 30, 2026.

After Peddi, Ram Charan will reunite with director Sukumar for their upcoming project, tentatively titled RC17, following their successful collaboration on Rangasthalam.

With anticipation building for the teaser, fans are keeping a close watch for updates as Ram Charan's birthday approaches, eager to catch the first look of the film's high-octane sports drama action.

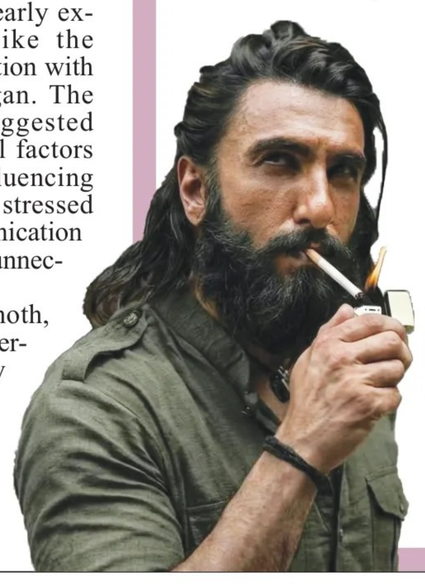
RAMYA
Criticises Dhurandhar 2 Calls Film Complete Propaganda

Kannada actor and former politician Ramya has criticised the film Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge, calling it complete propaganda despite its strong performance at the box office.

Taking to social media platform X, Ramya shared a sharp reaction to the sequel, questioning its content and narrative approach. She urged director Aditya Dhar to move away from what she described as jingoistic storytelling. In her post, she expressed disappointment, stating that the film did not meet expectations.

Ramya also criticised the film's pacing and presentation, calling it an endurance test for viewers. According to her, the movie felt stretched and failed to keep the audience engaged. She went on to advise viewers to skip watching it in theatres, highlighting her dissatisfaction with the overall experience.

Her remarks come at a time when the film is enjoying commercial success and receiving appreciation from several sections of the audience and film industry. However, it has also triggered debate over its themes and messaging.



Ameer Criticises Political Interference In Jana Nayagan Censorship

Noted director Ameer has strongly criticised the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and the Election Commission (EC) over delays in releasing Jana Nayagan, calling out a lack of transparency and clarity regarding objections to the film.

The political drama, starring Thalapathy Vijay, has faced unusual hurdles, with speculations that its content might conflict with election guidelines in Tamil Nadu. Ameer questioned why the censor board and the film team have not clearly communicated the issues, noting that the silence has created confusion and speculation. He also highlighted that as the film is a remake, it is unclear what new content could have triggered objections.

Ameer pointed out that the Election Commission's involvement, while respected, is unprecedented for a film during election season. He drew comparisons to past controversies like Vishwaroopam, where reasons for censorship were clearly explained, unlike the current situation with Jana Nayagan. The director suggested that political factors could be influencing the delay and stressed that clear communication is essential to avoid unnecessary speculation.

Directed by H Vinoth, the mega-budget entertainer features Bobby Deol, Pooja Hegde, Mamitha Baiju, Priyamani, Prakash Raj, and Gautham Menon in pivotal roles.

SAMEERA REDDY
Shares Healthy Lauki Brownie Recipe With Fans

Actress Sameera Reddy has encouraged her followers to upgrade their sweet cravings with a healthy twist by preparing Lauki ka Brownie. Known for sharing simple and nutritious recipes, the actress once again highlighted how traditional ingredients can be turned into tasty treats. In her latest post, Sameera explained the step-by-step method to make these brownies. She said the process begins by grating lauki (bottle gourd) and gently squeezing out excess water to keep the texture soft and moist. To this, jaggery, peanut butter, milk, oil, and vanilla are added and mixed well to form a smooth batter.

She further suggested adding oat flour or maida, along with cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and a pinch of salt. The mixture should be blended properly before stirring in chocolate chips, while saving a few to sprinkle on top for extra taste. The batter is then poured into a greased tray or one lined with parchment paper and baked at 180°C for about 25 to 30 minutes. Once baked, the brownies should be allowed to cool slightly before cutting into equal pieces and serving.

Sameera often shares such recipes that balance health and taste. Earlier in December, she posted about a banana stem and dal curry, which she said offers several health benefits, including improved digestion, better gut health, reduced bloating, and support for hormonal balance.

Her efforts continue to inspire many to adopt healthier eating habits without giving up on flavour.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.